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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 001055

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2019

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL GG

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: PROTESTS: GACHECHILADZE - SAAKASHVILI TO MEET

REF: TBILISI 1041

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: More cells were taken down over the weekend of June 6-7 freeing Rustaveli Avenue in front of the Tbilisi Marriott. Cells remain adjacent to Parliament and still block a portion of Rustaveli Avenue. Protests were light over the weekend. The non-parliamentary opposition is planning a larger rally on June 9 to commemorate two months of protesting. Meanwhile, Vice Speaker Paata Davitaia (We Ourselves faction) told Polchief that a meeting between President Saakashvili and Levan Gachechiladze will take place on June 9, a planned meeting that has been mentioned by other prominent opposition and government contacts. Davitaia said that among the non-parliamentary opposition, there was broad support for Gachechiladze as the emerging leader, with Irakli Alasania (Alliance) as a notable exception. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Embassy Note: Post will continue reporting regularly on the ongoing protests and events surrounding the protests. However, this cable will be the last daily cable update. Daily unclassified email updates (Tbilisi Update) will continue. To subscribe to the daily unclassified update, please send an email to tbilisipoleconofficers@state.gov located in the GAL. End Note.

Davitaia Details Talks

¶3. (C) Vice Speaker Paata Davitaia (We Ourselves faction) told Polchief that Levan Gachechiladze was planning to meet with President Saakashvili on June 9. Davitaia said that Gachechiladze wanted to be Prime Minister but that Saakashvili would not agree. (Embassy Note: Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria told Ambassador the same on June 5. End Note.) According to Davitaia, Gachechiladze was going to discuss earlier local elections (including direct elections for the mayor of Tbilisi) and possibly pre-term parliamentary elections. Davitaia said that Irakli Alasania (Alliance) has not agreed to support Gachechiladze's role as leader of the opposition. Davitaia alleged that Alasania's camp was again pushing rumors that he was America's preferred candidate.

Non-Parliamentary Opposition Addresses Diplomats ... Again

¶4. (C) Nino Burjanandze (Democratic Movement - United Georgia), Salome Zourabichvili (Georgia's Way), David Gamkrelidze (Alliance - New Rights), Levan Gachechiladze, Eka Beselia (United Georgia), and Alex Petriashvili (Alliance) addressed diplomats on June 5. Ostensibly, the meeting was called to discuss the charter that the non-parliamentary opposition had signed. None of the participants had prepared remarks and the meeting resulted in the leaders each addressing the diplomatic corps in a stream of consciousness fashion, hardly mentioning the charter. In sum, the non-parliamentary opposition listed a number of grievances against Saakashvili and said that they would not stop

protesting until Saakashvili resigned. Zourabichvili announced that the non-parliamentary opposition would organize a massive rally on June 9 to commemorate two months of protesting. No other plans, short or long term strategies were announced other than continuing protests.

¶ 15. (C) In spite of the subdued reception from the diplomatic corps, non-parliamentary opposition leaders declared success. Burjanadze told the press that "the ambassadors gained a very deep insight into the current Georgian political crisis." Gamkrelidze said that the meeting reassured him of the correctness of their strategy saying that "we heard many interesting opinions" adding that "I (Gamkrelidze) am now convinced that our strategy is absolutely right." Zourabichvili said that diplomats have changed their attitude and their call for dialogue "is more addressed to the authorities than opposition." Differing in his perception of the meeting, the Estonian Ambassador told Poloff that the meeting was a colossal waste of time, and that he was tired of the repetitive calls for meetings.

A Potential Warm Welcome for A/S Gordon

¶ 16. (C) Cells were removed in front of the Tbilisi Marriott on Sunday afternoon now freeing up traffic on Rustaveli avenue except in front of Parliament and its side streets. Zourabichvili promised a warm welcome for A/S Gordon saying that "(t)he public must clearly express its protest against Saakashvili and his policy in view of the visit of A/S Gordon." Zourabichvili said that protesters would march from Parliament to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Prosecutor's office on June 9. (Embassy Comment: Staging a

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massive rally on June 9 on short notice and during the workweek strikes us as highly unlikely. Turnout will likely be average or possibly a few thousand. End Comment.)
TEFFT